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ABSTRACT

A follow-up study was conducted in 1994-96 of the professional development of adult education professors who participated in the Kellogg Faculty Seminar on Adult and Continuing Education in 1987 and 1988. From a sample of 33 professors, 21 completed questionnaires and in-depth interviews designed to determine the professors' participation in professional development activities and the broad impacts of the Kellogg Faculty Seminar on their professional development, as well as the significance of specific professional development experiences. Analysis of the data, using the constant comparative method, resulted in several major conclusions: (1) the course of professional development for individual participants was personal and unique; (2) general participation in professional development was organized in terms of four aspects: reasons, deterrents, formats, and topics; (3) the significant professional development experiences of the participants were diverse and varied in format, content area, and provider; (4) the professional development experiences were significant in individual ways to each participant, yet there were common themes, including a time factor, professional relationships, new or transformed perspectives, collaboration, self-affirmation, defining focuses, career relevancy, relation to the field, visibility and recognition, and sense of contribution; and (5) participants generally viewed the Kellogg Faculty Seminar as a significant professional development experience. (KC)

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Professional Development of Adult Education Professors: A Study of the Kellogg Faculty Seminar Participants

Final Report

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FINAL REPORT
W. K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION SUPPORTED PROJECT

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ADULT EDUCATION PROFESSORS: A STUDY OF THE KELLOGG FACULTY SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS

NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION

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Final Report*

W. K. Kellogg Foundation Supported Project
The Professional Development of Adult Education Professors:
A Study of the Kellogg Faculty Seminar Participants

Institution: **North Carolina State University**
Department of Adult and Community College

Project Period: **September 1, 1994 - May 31, 1996**

Staff: **Li-Shyung Hwang (Principal Investigator)**
Drs. Nancy E. Hagan and Edgar I. Farmer (Project Advisors)

Executive Summary

Starting on September 1, 1994, and ending on May 31 1996, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation provided a grant in the amount of $3,000 to North Carolina State University, Department of Adult and Community College Education, to conduct a study on the professional development of adult education professors who participated in the Kellogg Faculty Seminar on Adult and Continuing Education in 1987 and 1988. The project purpose was to gain a phenomenological understanding of the nature and significance of the participants' professional development.

Thirty-three adult education professors, as the Kellogg Faculty Seminar participants, formed the basis of a purposive sample for this study. A qualitative research approach was chosen to achieve the project purpose. A questionnaire and in-depth interviews were employed to gather data. The questionnaire was designed to collect information concerning the participants' general participation in professional development activities and the broad impacts of the Kellogg Faculty Seminar on their professional development. The interviews were intended to address the significance of specific professional development experiences.

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* Part of this report is directly derived from the author's unpublished doctoral dissertation entitled "Professional Development of Adult Education Professors: A Qualitative Inquiry Into a Selected Group."

Of the 33 original participants of the Kellogg Faculty Seminar, 21 participated in the current study. Data obtained from both the questionnaire and interviews were analyzed, using the constant comparative method. Major conclusions included: 1) The course of professional development for individual participant generally represented his or her own course of career development. 2) General participation in professional development was organized in terms of four aspects: reasons, deterrents, formats, and topics. 3) The significant professional development experiences of the participants were diverse; and varied in format, content area, and provider. 4) The professional development experiences were significant in individual ways to each participant, yet commonality ran across participants. The primary themes include a time factor, professional relationships, new or transformed perspectives, collaboration, self-affirmation, defining focuses, career relevancy, relation to the field, visibility and recognition, and sense of contribution. 5) Participants generally viewed the Kellogg Faculty Seminar as a significant professional development experience. This final report emphasizes the assessment of the broad impacts of the Kellogg Faculty Seminar on the participants' professional development.

Progress Toward Goals

A. Outcomes

The actual research process conformed closely to that which was proposed. In accordance with the project purpose, the specific goals of this study were:

1. To examine the course of professional development of the purposely selected adult education professors (the Kellogg Faculty Seminar participants).

2. To determine the patterns of the general participation in professional development of these selected adult education professors.

3. To understand the significant professional development experiences of these selected adult education professors.

4. To assess the broad impacts of the Kellogg Faculty Seminar on the professional development of these participants.

The major findings of this research were as follows:

1. The course of professional development for individual adult education professor generally represented his or her own course of career development. In other words, professional development and career development were almost synonymous. There was no evidence to conclude a cohort phenomena regarding the course of professional development of these Kellogg Faculty Seminar participants.

2. The participants' general participation in professional development was organized in four aspects: a) the most prominent reasons for participating in professional development were concerned with *professional advancement*; b) the most prominent deterrents to participating in professional development were *time* and *money*; c) *conference*, *workshop*, and *reading* were the most frequently cited formats of the

professional development activities in which these selected professors actually participated; and d) *adult learning and adult development, teaching and instruction*, and *diversity* were the most frequently cited topics of the professional development activities.

3. The significant professional development experiences of these selected adult education professors were diverse, including the professional development opportunities that occurred inside and outside the employing institutions; these experiences varied in format, content area, and provider. The triggers of and challenges involved in these professional development experiences also varied.

4. The professional development experiences were significant in various ways to each participant. The primary themes are represented by the time factor (timing), professional relationships, new or transformed perspectives, collaboration, self-affirmation, defining focuses, career relevancy, relation to the field, visibility and recognition, and sense of contribution.

5. The participants almost unanimously viewed the Kellogg Faculty Seminar as a significant professional development experience. The most prominent themes associated with the Kellogg experience include the time factor, professional relationships, defining focuses, and relation to the field of academic adult education. These will be discussed further later in this section.

Although the participants reported a variety of professional development experiences beyond the Kellogg Faculty Seminar, this particular one (the Kellogg Seminar experience) was used as an exemplary case in the larger research project so that the themes about the significance of professional development could be discussed in a realistic context. The following discussion will demonstrate what the Kellogg Faculty Seminar offered in relation to the overall themes of significance.

Evidence pertaining to the Kellogg Faculty Seminar was drawn mainly from the questionnaire responses regarding the broad impacts of the Seminar and from the interview data regarding participants' significant professional development experiences. More than a dozen themes were found pertinent to the significance of the Kellogg Faculty Seminar. The most striking of these are: *time factor (timing),* and *professional relationships (network and colleagueship),* followed by *defining focuses*, and *relation to the field (commitment to the field).* Other primary themes related to the significance of the Kellogg experience include: *collaboration, mentoring, encouragement and support, self-reaffirmation, and sense of learning community*. The following discussion highlights the first four themes.

Time Factor

The significance of the time factor depends upon a professional development opportunity coming at a proper time in one's career life. There was a mix of early and mid-career professors who participated in the Kellogg Faculty Seminar. Participants who found a time factor significant concluded that the Kellogg experience came at "the right time" even though the significant meanings associated with the time factor varied. Most of the participants who reported the time factor as important as to the significance of the Seminar were then early-career professors.

The significance of the time factor may also be seen from another angle. One of four respondents who indicated "no broad impacts" of the Kellogg Seminar on their professional development expressed that perhaps timing was one of the factors leading to the assessment of "no broad impacts." In fact, three of the four professors indicating no broad impacts had gained the academic rank of associate professor by the time they participated in the Kellogg Seminar; thus, perhaps, the reason that the Seminar did not have as much impact on them as it had on others in terms of the career advancement. The optimal impacts of the Kellogg Seminar might be largely on junior rather than mid-career faculty.

Professional Relationships (Networks and Colleagueship)

Networks and colleagueship, as the primary components of professional relationships, are important for professors in many ways such as in providing moral support, sharing common concerns, exchanging information and ideas, and taking collaborative actions. The Kellogg Faculty Seminar nurtured professional relationships by encouraging networking and collaboration among the participants.

The respondents perceived that the Kellogg Seminar offered the space, time, climate, and support for extensive interactions; and that the residential format provided a retreat atmosphere conducive to such interactions. The research findings also suggest that a productive and educative network is usually established through some type of common action, which in the Kellogg case was the engagement in the career projects.

Defining Focuses

It is necessary for professors to define and develop their focus areas so that they can establish a depth of subject expertise in teaching, research, and service. One of the objectives of the Kellogg Faculty Seminar was to facilitate participants' engagement in at least one career development project which could address focus area(s) for teaching, scholarship, or improved practice (Apps, et al., 1988-1989). Each participant was provided with a small grant and with technical assistance in terms of a database search for materials in connection with his or her projects. Such assistance helped the participants to proceed with projects which could otherwise be impeded due to time and financial constraints.

Most of the participants developed a research agenda as a result of the Kellogg Faculty Seminar. Respondents who identified the development of academic focus area(s) as a significance of the Kellogg experience tended to maintain the same focus area(s) as their long-term scholarly interests.

Relation to the Field (of Academic Adult Education)

For most participants, it was important to have a "collective identity" as an academic member of the field of adult education. They sought both a professional identity and professional validation through professional development experiences. One of the objectives of the Kellogg Faculty Seminar was to discuss future directions and to select issues of special importance for the field (Apps et al., 1988-1989). This objective provided a common ground and an area of a common concern for the participants. Furthermore, discussion of the future of the field encouraged participants to reflect upon their own connection with and commitment to the field. The participants felt that their connection and commitment to the field were indeed reinforced through intensively interacting and sharing common concerns with colleagues in the Kellogg Seminar.

B. Implementation

Project Design Activities

Once the research approach was determined, the research process launched into the stage of determining data collection methods; and subsequently, developing the instrument and the interview guides. The process of developing the questionnaire and the interview guides started in early August, 1994. In September 1994, a preliminary draft of the questionnaire and the interview guides was prepared and presented in a meeting (held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison) with the three major staff members (Drs. Judy Adrian, Jerry Apps, and Alan Knox) of the 1987 and 1988 Kellogg Faculty Seminar. The comments and suggestions on the research project from this meeting were helpful and later incorporated into the revised questionnaire and interview guide. The continued revision process has involved review by an advisory panel of experts, including the project's advisory committee, one member of the target informant group, and two experienced designers of questionnaires. The panel of experts has followed an iterative process while reviewing the

questionnaire. Their inputs were taken into consideration and incorporated into the refinement of questionnaire and interview guide.

The finalized questionnaire consisted of five sections: 1) general information (e.g., demographic data); 2) a timeline of professional development (representing the course of professional development); 3) information on general participation in professional development (e.g., reasons, deterrents, formats, and topics); 4) the assessment of the Kellogg experience; and 5) a timeline of career development. An instruction sheet was developed and included in the questionnaire material. With this instruction sheet, the interview questions were included so that the participants would have the opportunity to reflect upon their professional development experiences prior to the interviews. Interview questions were designed to address five aspects of significant professional development experiences: the nature, triggers, challenges, significance, and consequences.

Data Collection Activities

The 33 adult education professors (the Kellogg Faculty Seminar participants) of the purposive sample were contacted initially by an invitation letter sent from the researcher's advisory committee in October 1994. Following this initial contact, the researcher mailed a sample of the questionnaire materials along with a cover letter, a request for participation and a brief description of the research. Upon receiving the returned questionnaire and the correspondence information sheet indicating possible arrangements for interviews, the researcher began communicating with the respondents via telephone, facsimile, or electronic mail to arrange the interview schedule.

In practice, the questionnaire collection process and interview process proceeded in the same period of time. Seven potential participants were contacted for face-to-face interviews which began at the end of October, 1994. An interview was normally conducted after receiving the questionnaire response because in this way, the interview could provide an

opportunity to clarify, if necessary, the unclear responses in the questionnaire responses. Only with one participant was the interview conducted prior to receiving the questionnaire responses simply because of logistical circumstances.

In mid-November, 1994, a follow-up letter was sent to 16 professors who had not yet responded. Of these, four responded by February, 1995. At the close of the data collection period in February 1995, 21 professors had been interviewed, and 21 questionnaires were completed, bringing the total number of participants of this study to 21.

Among the 21 informants, seven participated in face-to-face interviews and 14 participated in telephone interviews. More than half of the 21 interviews were from 30 minutes to 1 hour long. Six interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes, while other six took between 45 and 60 minutes. Two interviews were about 25 minutes long, and seven were longer than 1 hour. Among the seven long interviews, two were longer than 2 hours. Three follow-up interviews were conducted to clarify some information. At the beginning of each interview, permission for tape recording was requested of every respondent. All participants agreed to be tape recorded. While data were being collected, an on-going data analysis proceeded. However, after the data collection process ended, an intensive analysis of data began, using constant comparative method as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

Important lessons learned during the life of the project concerned the management of reciprocity and ethical issues involved in a qualitative research. Reciprocity here means a mutual exchange of privilege. In this project, the participants granted the researcher the privilege to access them; in return, the researcher prepared herself to adjust interview schedules to the participants' conveniences. Most of the participants chose the time in which they would be available for interviews; the researcher then complied with the appointed schedules. Nevertheless, in one particular instance, the researcher made the

mistake of rushing the request for participation. The result was a situation in which the researcher was perceived to be intrusive according to the prospective participant. The researcher regretted not having managed the reciprocity more carefully in this particular case; however, she learned a lesson that a researcher must understand and respect the group norms and the lifestyles of participants, and do anything possible to accommodate them accordingly.

Ethical issues are likely to emerge in the processes of data collection and dissemination of findings. One ethical concern about tape-recording the interviews, as mentioned previously, was resolved by obtaining permission from all the participants. However, anonymity remained a critical and challenging issue. It was especially challenging to be able to preserve the anonymity of the project participants since almost every one of them has prominent status in adult education academia. A potential issue was that the information shared by the participants might reveal some distinctive features which could imply their true identities. To deal with this issue, the measures taken include presenting the background data of participants in aggregate form, and the use of pseudonyms to refer to participants as the information appears in the complete report (the form of dissertation).

C. Context

This project was conducted in a cross-institutional context because the individual participants were located in different institutions across North America.

That the researcher was a graduate student and as an outsider of this group of participants presented both negative and positive factors as to undertaking this project. For example, as a student the investigator had to make extra efforts to cross unfamiliar borders regarding the academic life of faculty and to build her own self-confidence in order to gain the trust and cooperation from the professors. At the same time, being a graduate student perhaps means readily gaining support from many professors. In any case, the Kellogg Faculty

Seminar has proved to be a positive factor in the project context because the Seminar legitimately provided a common thread to define this purposive sample.

This research was conducted at the individual level and therefore did not involve relationships with other institutions or organizations. However, throughout the research process, the assistance and support offered by the individual participant professors at different institutions were essential to the completion of this project. Three staff members of the original project, the Kellogg Faculty Seminar in 1987 and 1988, should be acknowledged for their valuable support. They are Drs. Judith Adrian, Jerry Apps, and Alan Knox.

Future Plans

As a research study, some practical and theoretical implications of this project were drawn for the field of academic adult education. Recommendations for future research were also made (see the complete report). The fact that the area concerning the professional development and adult educators is increasingly drawing attentions in the field is indicated by a few recently published books such as Ralph Brockett's (1991) *Professional Development for Educators of Adults;* and Patricia Cranton's (1996) *Professional Development as Transformative Learning: New Perspectives for Teachers of Adults* Therefore, the need for more related studies is apparent and encouraged.

Engagement in this project has fostered the investigator's strong interest in such areas as faculty development, continuing professional development, and adult education as a field of study. She is interested in continuing to study how faculty professional development at the individual level relates to the development of the field as a whole.

Dissemination

The results of this study has been and will be made available to the field in the following ways:

1. All participants in this study have been informed of the completion of this study. Copies of the complete report (in the form of doctoral dissertation) has been made available to participants as well as those who have interest in knowing the results of this project. To date, 19 formal copies have been disseminated.

2. The information from this project has been and will be disseminated through conference presentations:

   - November 3, 1995: 1995 AAACE (American Association for Adult and Continuing Education) conference at Kansas City, Missouri, November 1-4, 1995.

   - May 17-19, 1996: 1996 AERC (Adult Education Research Conference) at the University of South Florida, Tampa, Florida.

The plans for further dissemination of the project information include:

1. The report to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation (this is being proposed to be submitted to ERIC).

2. Articles are being prepared for the submission to appropriate journals in the field of adult and continuing education.

Evaluation and Recommendations

The evaluation of this project is actually incorporated into the previous portions of this report. A few important points are recapitulated and reemphasized as follows:

- Adult education professors acknowledge the significance of professional development experiences as to their personal and professional growth and advancement.

- Significant professional development experiences help the individual adjust and readjust their own relationships to the field of (academic) adult education. Most positive experiences enhanced their commitments to the development of the field.

- In general, the Kellogg Faculty Seminar is assessed as having made significant impacts on the participants' professional development, particularly in terms of assisting them in developing networks, research agendas, and collaborative relationships with colleagues. These in many cases served as a springboard for their career advancement.

Thus, a structure like the Kellogg Faculty Seminar would be a welcome professional development activity for adult education faculty, especially the junior professors. Similar programs could be developed for professors at other levels, or for faculty of different disciplines so that they too could enjoy the professional development benefits of such a program.

Academic professionals at different career stages need and seek various opportunities for their professional growth and rejuvenation. Faculty in the academic field of adult and continuing education are in a special need of resources and supports for professional development not only for the sake of their individual growth but also for the continuing development of the field of adult and continuing education. As many of graduate programs in adult education in North America are currently facing various crises, efforts should be made to confront issues and problems existing in the field.

Much appreciation goes to the W. K. Kellogg Foundation for its accommodating the investigator as a graduate student with a grant in support of this particular project, exploring the area of professional development of adult and continuing education faculty.

The continuous support from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation for any research effort that promotes understanding of adult and continuing education will be of great help and critical importance to the growth and development of this field, both theory and practice.